

Two Town Trolley

Regional Paratransit Service

Participating Communities:
East Longmeadow
Hampden

4/1/2014



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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Secretary Glen Shor
Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration and Finance
Massachusetts State House Room 373
Boston MA, 02133

Dear Secretary Shor:

The Town of East Longmeadow is pleased to submit this final report as the lead community for the Community Innovative Challenge Grant “Two Town Trolley” program. Two Town Trolley is a regional paratransit service for the towns of East Longmeadow and Hampden.

Two Town Trolley was created to help alleviate the obstacles to accessing paratransit services. Obstacles included increase in fares, and lack of non-American with Disabilities Act (ADA) service due to the rural landscape of both communities. Transportation to medical appointments and social opportunities play a significant role in elders maintaining their independence.

Given our new fiscal reality, the purchase of both lunch and transportation has become prohibitive for many elders in the two communities. A one way trip using a Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) van cost between \$2.50 - \$3.00 per one way trip, and the cost of lunch ranges from \$1.75-\$3.00 at the Senior Centers. When the cost of the meal is combined with fares, an elder can be faced paying \$40.00 weekly for lunch. For many elders living on a fixed income, \$160.00 per month is prohibitive in addition to increased cost of prescriptions and utilities.

Two Town Trolley was created to help alleviate this burden on community elders. The primary goal of Councils on Aging is to help elders maintain their independence. Two Town Trolley played a key role in supporting this mission. The East Longmeadow Council on Aging is the lead agency and the Hampden Council on Aging provides the dispatching for the service.

Elders immediately responded to the new service and within two months, a waiting list for trips occurred and an adaption was made that restricted rides to medical appointments, senior centers and municipal buildings.

Operational costs have been funded by local support including sponsorships, donations, fares and small grants. A proposal is presently being prepared to present to the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority for consideration of reimbursement for service being provided by Two Town Trolley.

Our hope is that this model will be used for those communities who do not have a supplemental paratransit service.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Brennan Executive Director East Longmeadow Council on Aging

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This regional paratransit service involving the Towns of East Longmeadow and Hampden provides efficient, affordable and accessible paratransit service to elders in both municipalities. Hampden is a small rural community that does not receive fixed route service from the regional transit authority (PVRTA) and as a result receives limited paratransit. East Longmeadow receives more ADA service from PVRTA, but the cost of fares creates a financial hardship for many riders. PVRTA fares range from \$2.50-\$3.00 per one way trip for both communities. For elders living on a fixed income, this presents a financial challenge.

Our overriding goal to provide affordable and efficient paratransit services was realized immediately and we are delighted that 4,600 one way trips were provided during this grant period.

The desire to move from a pilot program to a permanently funded program was not realized but as a result of the outcomes produced, we are now at a viable position to secure funding from the regional transit authority as well as from the participating communities. Members of the Board of Selectmen from East Longmeadow and Hampden are aware that funding requests will be pursued during Fiscal Year 2015.

PARTNER COMMUNITIES

The two Councils on Aging partnered to provide these services. East Longmeadow is the lead agency and contracted out with Hampden to provide the dispatch services. Geographically, the location of each town allows for a very sensible route to common destinations in Springfield. Most of the medical offices are located in down town Springfield. The van can pick up riders in Hampden and easily pick up East Longmeadow riders on its way to Springfield. This allows for consolidated rides, decreasing the cost per trip.

On a quarterly basis, the town of East Longmeadow is billed for dispatching services from Hampden . A benefit that was not anticipated was increase hours for the Outreach Worker in Hampden. The Outreach Worker had previously been coordinating volunteer rides as best she could in the limited hours that she received funding for (15 hours per week). The Town of Hampden decided that the Outreach Worker would be paid additional hours to provide the scheduling for Two Town Trolley. This increased her hours substantially and provided dispatching services for the two communities. East Longmeadow COA provides the supervision to the drivers as well as funding driver training.

Discussions with both Longmeadow and Wilbraham resulted in a very positive response. Both communities provide van service but only with volunteers and at an “as needed” basis. Both communities vans would be available , however until permanent funding can be secured, this collaboration is on hold.

GOALS

Two Town Trolley began service to meet the following objectives;

- to transition from a pilot program to a permanent and self-sustaining paratransit service that would increase and sustain older adult’s independence by providing an affordable, more cost effective, and efficient paratransit service;
- Create an expandable service that could invite other surrounding towns to join and increase group and shared riders going to common destinations;
- Create a model template of delivery that would allow communities in Massachusetts to easily adopt; and
- Increase availability of transportation to the communities’ senior centers, libraries and governmental offices.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

For the past 7 years, area COA’s have been concerned about paratransit service in this area. Increase in fares, loss of local coordination and control had become an ongoing frustration for the communities. In January of 2012, the Council on Aging from East Longmeadow approached the Council on Aging from Hampden to propose a regional paratransit service for the two

communities. An application for funding from a Service Incentive Grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) was submitted to begin a regional pilot program.

EOEA awarded \$11,400 to the municipalities to begin the program. The grant would cover the cost of employing two part time drivers and a dispatcher. The East Longmeadow Council on Aging served as the lead agency and the Hampden Council on Aging would provide the dispatching services, to be reimbursed by the grant.

PVTA donated a used van to the East Longmeadow COA. This was made possible because of the role the Director of the COA had as a representative on the PVTA Advisory Board and chairperson of the Paratransit Committee. Conversations and a trusted relationship developed between the COA Director and the staff at PVTA which ensured a level of confidence that this regional service could be created.

During the 2nd reporting period of this grant, PVTA obtained a new van under the MassDot grant program and donated the van to the East Longmeadow Council on Aging. PVTA would maintain ownership and the town of East Longmeadow would insure the vehicle. Maintenance would also be provided by PVTA. This has provided a substantial savings to the operational budget.

In November of 2013, more concrete discussion began regarding proposals for reimbursement from PVTA. These discussions are presently on hold due to change in staffing at PVTA.

A grant was once again awarded by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs for \$27,000 to fund Two Town Trolley for the remainder of this fiscal year.

BUDGET

The budget was developed based on staffing needs, cost of fuel, maintenance and training. The time of operation reflected estimated mileage and staffing hours. I research other COA's that provided their own van service to estimate hourly rate for driver and dispatcher. Gas was estimated based on East Longmeadow DPW's fuel cost for their vehicles.

Budget:

Item	Cost
Gas	7769
Salaries	25362.25
Maintenance and Supplies	5769.1
Training	200
<i>Total Expense</i>	<i>39100.35</i>

Income:

Item	Amount
Rider Fares	1,891.00
Donations	4,970.00
<i>Total Revenue</i>	<i>6861</i>

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Some of the challenges that presented themselves were expected while others were not.

Foremost were the repair costs that we were faced with receiving a used older van. Although we were able to meet the financial challenges, it certainly put a strain on our budget.

Predictable funding has been our biggest challenge. Through grants, donations and fares we have been able to maintain our level of service. However an increase in fares was needed for out of town trips.

Another unexpected challenge was the departure of a key staff person at PVTa. One of the outcomes presented in the application was to secure funding from PVTa. Significant progress had been made regarding a proposal that would be submitted to PVTa for consideration. Simultaneously, this staff person left for another position in Connecticut. At the present time, this position has not been filled, so the proposal is on hold.

A wait list was not anticipated so soon into the inception of the service. Within 3 months, Two Town realized an ongoing wait list for rides. This will continue until enough funding is secured for two vans.

OUTCOMES

The majority of objectives were accomplished during the last 18 months.

Affordable paratransit options have increased to residents of both communities.

Consolidations of rides have exceeded expectations. The state average of riders per hour is approximately 2 riders per hour. Two Town Trolley averages 4-6 per hour, including a full van during the lunch hour.






4,600 trips were provided during this grant period.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Project Goal	Measure	Current	Prior	Trend	Target	Status	Comments
To develop a regional paratransit program for the Towns of Hampden and East Longmeadow	# of transportation opportunities will be increased	4,600	0	Increasing	4,000		
	# of affordable, cost effective, and efficient paratransit services offered in the community will increase	30	0	Increasing	30		
Status Legend	Off target: 		Close to target: 		On target: 		Not applicable: -----

RESOURCES

Agreement between the two towns is presently in draft form.